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ABSTRACT

An evaluation program cooperatively conducted between the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and the Western Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (WASC) is outlined in this newsletter. In the ACSA/WASC model, the total school report is compiled from separate reports submitted by committees of the administration, certificated staff, classified staff, students, and parents. Topics covered in the separate reports include philosophy, curriculum, activities, facility, students, and community. (MLF)

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## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

### Introduction

The self-evaluation program at the elementary level is designed to assist an individual school or school district in determining the effectiveness of its program. The entire process provides a method whereby all segments involved in the school's total program assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses in order to develop a blueprint which will give direction for improving the school's program, while simultaneously increasing the understanding of all participants. At the very heart of the self-evaluation process is a willingness of the individuals involved to look at themselves, to state what they hope to accomplish, how they hope to accomplish it, and then evaluate through self and external audit just how well these objectives are being accomplished.

### Background

Many people involved in elementary education have long sought some type of self-appraisal procedure appropriate at the elementary level. Accreditation procedures have been standard practice at the college and secondary levels for decades. In some areas of the country, similar procedures have been developed for the elementary level. The major purpose of these accreditation procedures is to allow some outside group to take a completely objective look at the school's services and performance and to make some judgment as to how well they are accomplishing their objectives. Efforts of elementary administrators in California finally came to fruition in 1973 when ACSA approved the "Elementary School Self-Evaluation Project," cooperatively conducted between ACSA and the Western Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (WASC). Seven elementary schools from throughout the state participated in this pilot program during the 1973-74 school year. Three schools participated in the program during the 1974-75 school year, and two additional schools are participating in this program in the current school year.

### Basic Philosophy

The functioning of a sound program of public education is essential to any modern nation. A citizenry well prepared for effective participation in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of the country is the primary hope for institution renewal in a democratic system. The elementary school is expected to reflect the character and attitudes of the community's inhabitants, but the school must also provide positive leadership for change based upon identified needs. The school must consequently reappraise and redefine its goals and objectives in terms of the changing needs of the community.

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The basic assumption inherent in the elementary school self-evaluation process is that schools exist to fulfill the function that society assigns them. These functions need to be identified; and the philosophy, goals, and objectives need to be pinpointed. The process provides a method whereby the community, school staff, and school population may study the school's program to identify strengths and weaknesses.

The system of public education in the United States is unique and has achieved remarkable results. It will be able to continue to achieve such desirable results only to the degree that it can maintain a reliable renewal system. It is the purpose of the self-evaluation process to assure that this will take place.

**Suggested Procedures at the School Level**

The primary function of the self-evaluation process is to assist each school in appraising its total educational program in light of its **own** stated objectives. The evaluation procedures outlined in the model established through the ACSA project define means by which the school can improve its program by tailoring that program to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of the particular school population served in harmony with its stated philosophy, objectives, and financial ability.

In the ACSA/WASC model, the total school report is compiled from separate reports submitted by committees of the administration, certificated staff, classified staff, students, and parents. The major functions performed through the use of these reports are:

1. to provide a self-appraisal process whereby the personnel of an elementary school, students, and community representatives make an intensive study of the total school program, and

2. through the cooperative efforts of all groups enumerated above, to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and

3. to identify areas needing further study.

**Compliling a School Report**

Early faculty involvement and participation on a voluntary basis is absolutely essential in the self-evaluation project. It takes a tremendous amount of time and energy on the part of all concerned, and there must be total commitment to the idea that the effort will have beneficial results to the program. In the ACSA/WASC model, there are several sections that when combined comprise the total school report. These portions include:

1. **PHILOSOPHY** – this portion of the report relates to the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the school district, and how these are related to the individual school. The school's goals and objectives, and how these relate to the district philosophy would also be included.

2. **CURRICULUM** – information on curriculum from the district level down to the school and student level. The model suggests that at least one, but not more than three subject areas of instruction, be evaluated from among the basic subjects. Some school reports include information about the affective as well as cognitive areas.

3. **ACTIVITIES** – efforts to develop desirable social traits and qualities of leadership would be included under this section. The function of student body organizations, and the way in which they operate should be reported. Information as to how special services assist both students and teachers to understand, develop, and provide human relation experiences important to achieving responsible maturity would also be reported.

4. **FACILITY** – information about the physical plant, and how it is used to enhance the instructional program would be reported under this section. The working arrangement for the administrative staff as well as the classified information on recruitment, selection, work assignment, line of authority, salaries, inservice training, and such would also be reported.

5. **STUDENTS** – attitudes and feelings form a very important part of the self-evaluation process and should be included as a special section of the school report. Included would be such areas as homework, discipline, and student reaction to administrators, teachers, and classified staff.

6. **COMMUNITY** – included in this section would be such information as how often parents visit the school and what their purposes are when they do visit, attitudes and opinions about the school, and suggested changes would be reported. Parents would also be given an opportunity to respond through an instrument such as a survey about areas such as instruction, homework, discipline, purpose of education, objectives, finance, etc.

No attempt should be made to reconcile differences in opinion that may arise as the various reports are compiled. Differences in opinion are usually healthy and can result in much future progress.

When all the information is compiled into a total school report, it should give a good assessment of what the school is attempting to do. It should also allow someone from outside the school to look at the report and determine just what it was that the particular school set out to accomplish.

**Visiting Committee**

Under the ACSA/WASC project, a visiting committee is established consisting of an elementary school principal, an elementary school teacher, a college representative specializing in elementary education, a state department representative, and a representative from the district office. A visitation to the school follows much the same pattern as at the secondary level with any other school, or to project a preconceived notion of what a good or superior school should be; but rather to evaluate the school in terms of its own stated philosophy, its reason for existence, its strengths and limitation, and the success of its efforts to improve its programs.

The committee is charged with maintaining an objective point of view at all times as it studies the school report and visits with people from the various segments of the school operation. Under the ACSA/WASC model, the chairman of the visiting committee will contact the school principal to make arrangements for disseminating the school report to the various committee members. The chairman will also meet with the staff early in the year to clarify the role of the visiting committee and should make himself available for visitation or consultation. The chairman makes committee assignments and begins organizing the time schedule in preparation for the actual visitation. Each committee member will be responsible for a particular segment of the school report. Under the ACSA/WASC model, the visiting team spends three days visiting the school. At the end of the three day visitation period, the committee presents an oral report to the entire staff. Members of the community, the district office, administration, and Board of Trustees are invited to attend this meeting. The report usually takes the form of commendations and recommendations. All sections of the school report are reviewed by the visiting committee, and there is an opportunity for members of the school community to ask questions and give input. The final responsibility of the committee is to put their work in written form. This final written report is then submitted to the participants at the school level.

**Follow Up**

The process of self-evaluation in and of itself can be a valuable and rewarding experience. In addition to the process at the school level, the real value of self-evaluation occurs after the visiting committee has made its report. Assuming that the people involved at the school level accept the committee's report in an open manner and desire to work toward self-improvement, they will select those areas in the visiting committee's recommendations they feel most valid and will address themselves to making changes that will accomplish the goals and objectives that they set forth. It will also be the responsibility of the district administration and the school board to follow through on district-wide recommendations. An improved educational program is assured when all people involved commit themselves wholeheartedly to the idea of self-evaluation and self-improvement through self-analysis and work in a dedicated and conscientious manner toward a more meaningful educational program for the youngsters they serve.

**Possible Modifications**

Schools that do not wish to go through a full blown self-evaluation process may still find many of the suggested guidelines found in the ACSA/WASC model to be very helpful in assessing their own school situation. It is quite conceivable that some schools may wish to obtain copies of the model and then select only those sections which are of particular interest to them. Some aspects of the model will fit in very well with assessments required in the Early Childhood Education program. Schools wishing to gather and analyze information as it pertains to a particular section of the overall school operation may wish to utilize the proven format developed through this project in a modified form adapted to the school's particular needs. Schools are invited to obtain copies of the materials developed through this project for study before committing themselves to such a self-evaluation process.

**Conclusions**

The Elementary School Self-Evaluation Project has been successfully conducted, and the Elementary Committee of ACSA endorsed the completed two-year pilot project. Both ACSA and WASC are interested in continuing their support of these efforts if there is enough interest in the field. The Accreditation Committee of ACSA is in the process of investigating the possibility of accrediting whole districts instead of individual schools. As a result of its work, it is quite conceivable that the model developed through this pilot project will be of value as school districts look in new directions at the self-evaluation process. Any district interested in further exploring the possibilities of involving themselves in a complete self evaluation process or in obtaining more information is requested to fill out and return the form below to:

**WASC, 1499 Bayshore Highway, Suite 244, Burlingame, California 94010**

Name_____ Address_____

☐ Please send "Procedures for Appraising the Elementary School" ($4.00/copy)

☐ Our school is interested in becoming involved in a total program of elementary self-evaluation, please send more information.

or

☐ See at Accreditation Booth at ACSA Spring Conference in San Diego

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